

**SLN:NCOP Aiming High update September 2020**

**By Chris Derbyshire, Partnership Manager, Widening Participation, University of Sussex**

The University of Sussex Widening Participation team have sought to increase their guidance and support for targeted young learners with caring responsibilities. This document sets out the support and initiatives currently available against the key findings of the Aiming High report (subject to the current operational issues caused by Covid-19):

**Specifically targeted information:**

- The University of Sussex Widening Participation (pre-entry) team are creating digital resources and toolkits with specific access points to information for young carers where relevant or appropriate.
- The team are proactively seeking to engage, promote and support (pre-entry) the opportunity and benefits of considering access to HE to young carers. We actively promote their inclusion in all our partnerships with schools and colleges.

**Age-appropriate intervention:**

- We provide interventions that are wholly appropriate for a learner's journey; all our IAG (information, guidance and advice) is timely and age appropriate.
- We have supported celebrations, IAG sessions, forums, and university campus-based activities (walk and talks, role modelling) based on the 'learner's journey' ethos to actively promote and support the value of higher education to this group of students.
- CPD provision to staff in education settings.

**Actively promote scholarship opportunities:**

- We have sought to develop information that explores and shares the financial support available to young carers to support finance information and advice.
- We are currently working with a large city college where signposting bursary entitlement is part of the support offered to their student base; the intention is to take this model of practice and embed it as practice within other colleges.
- Post-entry, young adult carers receive 'high priority' access to the 'hardship' fund to scaffold financial responsibilities.

**A safe person to talk to:**

- Student Ambassador ('Young Adult Carers') Group; current students with current young carer responsibilities as role models/signposting.
- There is currently no designated 'safe person', though Student Support for post-entry students will have a team of professionals in situ.
- Post-entry fast-track to counselling.
- Post-entry, drop-in bereavement support.

**Campus tours and reimbursements:**

- We offer campus tours/student shadowing in a bespoke way to both students and their parents as required, conducted by a current student young adult carer.
- Expenses are refunded; refreshments catered for.

**Work with young carer support services:**

- We proactively seek to work with and support our local young carers' support service.
- We proactively seek to create forums to share information and exchange best practice among other university practitioners.

**On-going campaigning:**

- We have identified young carers as a group who we want to provide specific support for beyond our broader Widening Participation targets and remit.
- We use forums and conferences to disseminate our model of practice and to raise the profile of this group of learners.
- We planned to support the Young Carers Festival this year and will revisit that option this coming year.
- We are proactively seeking to support the local 'support agency' for this group of learners.
- We will continue to promote awareness and be proactive in and around support for this group of learners.

**WIDENING PARTICIPATION TEAM**

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- We are proactively challenging our partners (pre-and post-16 education educators) to be aware of the barriers faced by and the concomitant considerations required by this group of learners.

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